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# JESSE KREMER

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**December 22, 2015**

**Kremer, Vos and Nass Circulate Bill to End Christmas Tree Bans in Churches**

**Madison, WI** – Today, Representative Jesse Kremer (R-Kewaskum), Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) and Senator Steve Nass (R-Whitewater) released a bill to prohibit bans of Christmas trees in churches. The proposal follows warnings from several municipal fire departments indicating that the future display of natural cut Christmas trees in churches would be prohibited.

*"As both a firefighter and fire inspector, I do my best to maintain a safe, hazard-free environment in the Village of Kewaskum," said Rep. Kremer. "However, there are fire officials in some of our communities who are doing their taxpayers a disservice. They are blatantly relieving themselves of any authorized discretion when it comes to allowing the safe display of natural cut Christmas trees in church sanctuaries during the Christmas season. This bill would ensure that this long-standing tradition can safely continue."*

In 2008, Wisconsin adopted the National Fire Protection Association's fire code, NFPA 1, which prohibits combustible vegetation such as a Christmas tree in places of assembly, except as allowed by the AHJ, or "authority having jurisdiction." Under the current code, a fire chief may allow a tree if adequate safeguards, such as suitable water supply, safe lighting and proper distance from heat sources, are observed. Despite this authority, however, local fire chiefs have begun to impose de facto bans on natural cut Christmas trees in places of worship.

*"The last thing we need is for bureaucrats to play the Grinch in every church in Wisconsin at Christmas," said Rep. Vos. "This common sense legislation keeps the Christmas spirit alive and well without affecting safety."*

The bill does not prohibit an AHJ from directing that a tree be removed due to a violation of safety practices outlined in NFPA 1 upon receipt of a complaint or completion of an inspection.

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